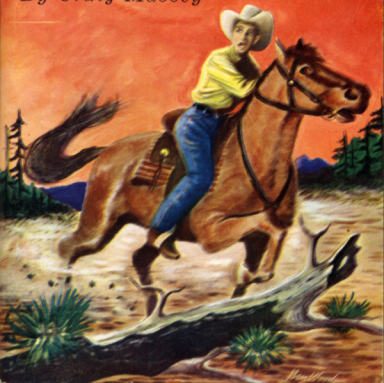


ONE OF THE "KID'S ADVENTURE" SERIES

FLEETFOOT

By Craig Massey



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FLEETFOOT

The "Kid's Adventure" Series

Mystery at Trembling T

Ol' Swayback

Golden-Cake-by-the-Fire

Ruff of Thunder Falls

The Mysterious Trading Wagon

A Midnight Adventure

The Secret Map

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by CRAIG MASSEY



ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Grand Rapids, Michigan

FLEETFOOT

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PREFACE

The first four stories in the Kid's Adventure Series, "Mystery at Trembling T," "Ol' Sway-back," "Ruff of Thunder Falls" and "Golden-Cake-by-the-Fire" were so well received that Mr. Massey was asked to write additional stories in the series. These new stories are of the same high quality as the first group. In them, boys and girls will find what they want—excitement, mystery, danger—and what they need: wholesome Christian stories with a concrete and vital Gospel message.

THE PUBLISHERS

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Bees were at work gathering nectar from the apple trees behind the small barn. A robin cheerfully sang from the maple tree at the corner of the house.

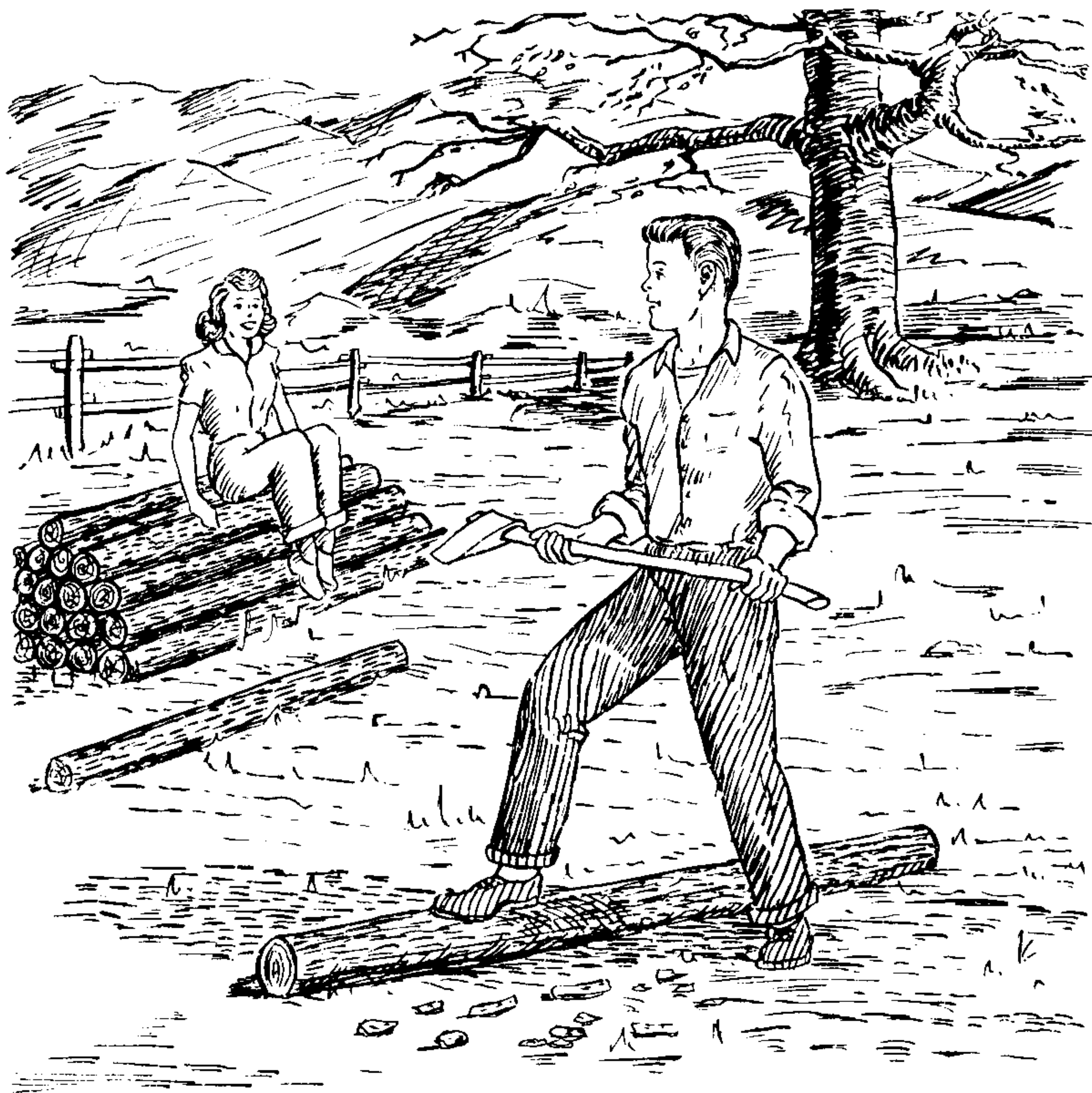
"Isn't this keen?" Jim sighed thoughtfully, as he bent to the task of stripping bark from one of the locust posts, which were to be used to build a new fence around the pasture.

Barbara Hollis, the thirteen-year-old girl from the neighboring farm sat on the pile of posts and nodded her head dreamily, "Oh, how I love the springtime. Everything seems so soft and beautiful!"

"Even the mud," Jim laughed, as he scraped his shoes for the fiftieth time that morning.

Barbara went on in her dreamy voice, "The skies are such a blue blue. And just see the pale apple blossoms. Don't they make you all happy inside?"

"I'd be happier if this stack of posts were ready," Jim said good-naturedly.



"Just look at the wheat fields. Dad says this promises to be the best year we ever had. Why, everything's just about perfect!"

Jim scowled, for things weren't quite so perfect for the Spangler family. The winter had been very hard. One of the two horses had died, and what extra money they had went for doctor bills when Jim's mother was sick. The work had been especially difficult with just one horse to do the

plowing. Every day meant work from sunup to sunset.

Now, with the sun so bright and beautiful and the fields green, it was hard to think about trouble. But the trouble was there all the time.

An hour passed and while Jim stripped bark he and Barbara talked about all kinds of things. Finally Barbara said, "Jim, my Dad says the reason you folks have so much trouble is that your Dad spends too much time studying the Bible and going off to church every Sunday morning and night to preach to just a handful of folks. Dad says this mountain country gives a man no time for such doings."

Jim straightened up and laid the ax against a peach tree. He squatted on the pile of logs and said earnestly, "I guess to most folks Dad seems a little odd, but I know how he feels. You see, Barbara, life is more than just plowing fields, milking cows, harvesting crops, eating and sleeping. Like Dad says, we have to prepare now for life after death. You see, we have accepted Christ as our Saviour and Lord and we have to take time out to tell other folks about Him."

"I know," Barbara retorted. "You've tried to tell me a hundred times, but I don't think you folks have near as much fun as we do, and I know our farm is heaps better than yours."

Jim was about to reply when a rattly wagon creaked into view. A huge, round man sat behind the team of black horses. Tied to the back of

the wagon was a third horse, a sorrel mare that seemed to be the most beautiful animal Jim had ever seen.

The man drove the team up to the pile of logs and said, "Be this the place where Jim Spangler lives?"

"Yes, I'm Jim Spangler."

"Well, I was 'spectin' ta meet a man instead of a fifteen-year-old boy. My name's Dunkin Funk. I heard ya be interested in gettin' a good horse."

Jim's eyes brightened, "Yes, sir, I do want a horse. I've been looking for one to help do the work on the farm."

"Well, now boy," a salesmanlike tone shaded Dunkin's voice, "I got just the horse fer ya." He turned himself around on the wagon seat and pointed to the sorrel mare. "Now, I ask ya, have ya ever seen a prettier mare than that? And she's fer sale and fer sale at a good price."

Jim stared at the horse in open admiration. There was no question about her beauty. And she seemed to be in perfect condition. Her red-brown coat glistened in the sunlight and her long mane and tail were a sight to behold.

"Oh, she's beautiful!" Barbara said.

"That she be, young lady, and even though I came ta do business with a man, I'm not opposed to businessin' with a boy about the sale if he has the price."

"Well," Jim explained, "last winter I went

trapping and caught thirteen prime beaver. I planned to sell them and buy the horse with the money."

"Thirteen prime beaver pelts ya have fer a horse. Well, now could I be takin' a look at them pelts? Just to make sure they're up ta what ya say and in good shape."

"Sure, Mr. Funk," Jim led the way to the barn where the skins were stretched out on big hoops of willow.

The man went over each in turn and nodded his head, "Prime they are and the price of my horse comes to just thirteen beaver pelts as they hang there in yer barn."

Jim hesitated and then said, "Wait a minute! I want to run in the house and ask someone about the trade."

"Make it hasty, lad. I'm not a man fer much dickerin'. There's other buyers awaitin' to snap up that mare fer any price I ask."

Jim bolted to the house and to his room where he knelt beside the bed, "Lord, I've asked you heaps of times about getting a horse to help on the farm. Now a man is outside and he has a nice horse. Should I give the beaver pelts for the horse? In Jesus' Name, Amen."

Jim stood to his feet and a feeling of certainty swept over him, "I believe," he said aloud, "I'm to have that horse."

He ran outside and approached Mr. Funk,

who was on the pile of locust posts talking with Barbara.

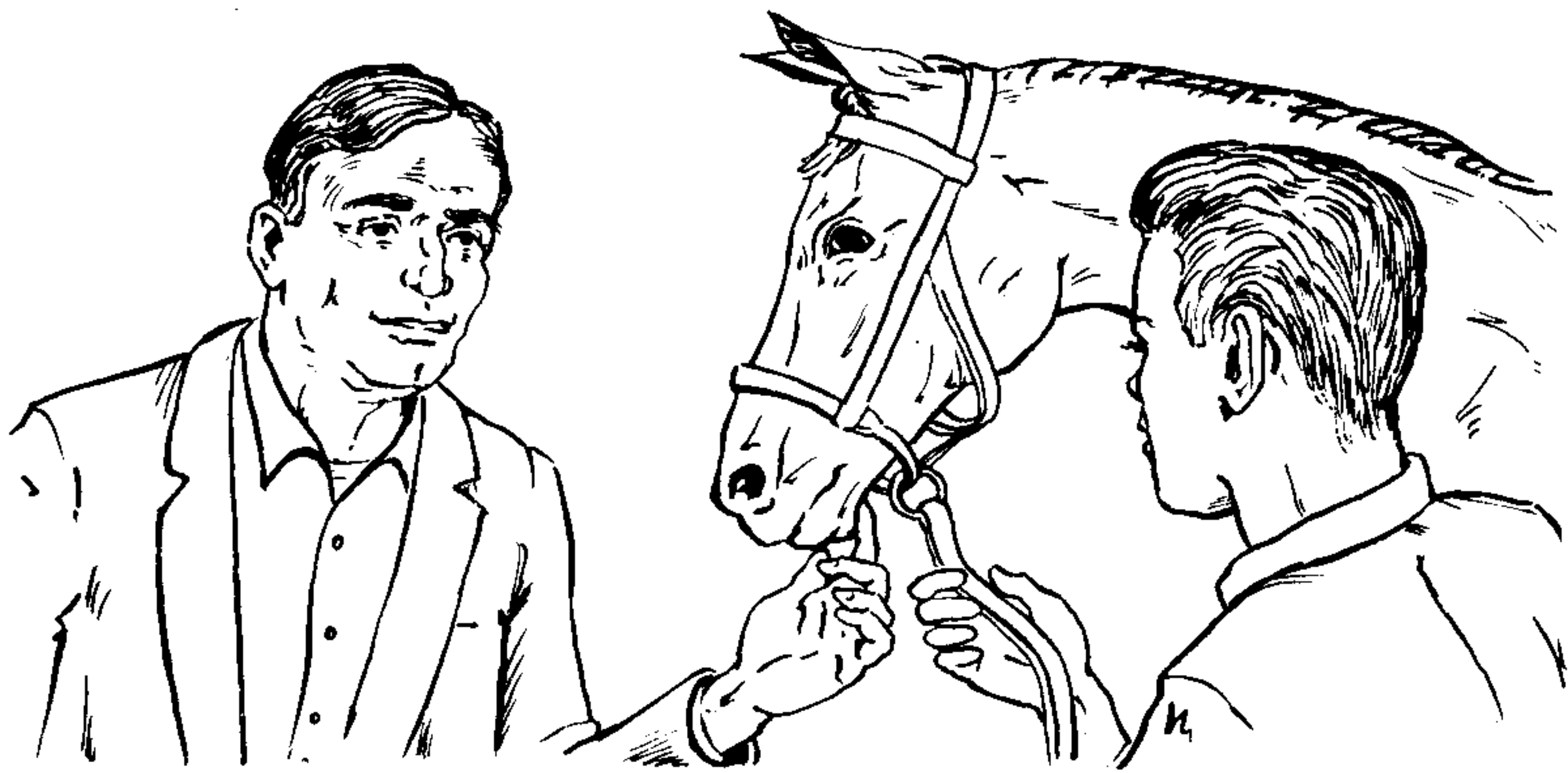
"Well, boy, did you get permission?"

"I'll take the horse, Mr. Funk."

"Yer a wise lad, my boy," the man rubbed his hands together in apparent satisfaction and then he repeated, "A very wise lad."

Jim went to the barn and took the beaver pelts to the wagon while the man unhooked the horse. "Now, let me tell you about this mare," the man said as he led her to the small pasture behind the barn. "She's strong and healthy like I said, but iffin' I were you, I'd let her rest fer a day afore I tried ridin' her, er hookin' her to a buggy. Try about nine tomorrow mornin'. That'll give her a chance to get acquainted."

"All right," Jim agreed. Then he asked, "What's her name?"



The man began, "Worth —," and then broke off. "I guess you'd better give her a new name."

A few minutes later Mr. Funk left, and Barbara and Jim leaned on the rail fence and watched the mare.

"Isn't she a beauty?" Jim sighed.

"She's pretty, but it seems sorta' strange that the man should just come up like that and sell you a horse."

"Look, Barbara," Jim said soberly, "I've been asking the Lord to help me get a horse. This is just the answer to that prayer."

"Did you ask your Mom or Dad about buying the horse?" Barbara asked.

"No," Jim replied. "They're both over at the Hicky farm this morning."

"Why did you run in the house then, Jim?"

"Well, I just wanted to pray about it once more, sorta' like checking up with the Lord on the decision."

At that moment the horse walked over to Jim and sniffed at him in a friendly way. "Isn't she a beaut?" he breathed, as he patted the white splash on the horse's forehead.

Jim had trouble getting back to the job of stripping the locust posts, and when he did he spent more time staring at the horse than he did working.

At noon his folks returned. When Jim explained what had happened his father said, "Well, Jim, they were your beaver pelts and I told you to do what you wanted with them. From the looks of that horse you made a good trade. In fact, I'm

wondering if something is wrong with her. It seems almost too good to be true."

"Just think, we'll have two horses to work with from now on," Jim said with enthusiasm, ignoring his father's doubt.

"If she's in good condition, I'd say she'll be about perfect for riding or drawing the buggy," Mr. Spangler said.

That afternoon Jim was still half-heartedly peeling logs; his attention was on the sorrel mare. Barbara came over at three and took her position atop the heap of posts.

"My Dad says it's nonsense to pray about a horse," she announced with certainty.

Jim answered quickly, "Lots of folks would call it foolish, but I just challenge you and your folks to watch and see the Lord use this horse to help us."

"All right, I'll tell them, and I'll watch myself," Barbara said defiantly.

A few minutes later another creaky wagon, drawn by two oxen, came up the road. Jed Harlin waved as he saw Jim and Barbara, "Hi, kids, nice spring day fer peelin' logs."

"Hi, Jed!" Jim returned the greeting as the oxen halted just a few feet away. He was about to tell Jed about the new horse when the man spotted the animal in the pasture.

"Well, saw my legs off and call me shorty, if that don't look like Dunkin Funk's cantankerous mare! But what would Dunk's mare be doin' here

unless that crooked ole horse dealer stuck somebody fer that worthless hunk of crow bait. Tell me, Jim, did yer pa buy thet horse from Dunk?"

"Well —, no, I did," Jim blurted out.

"Ya what!" Jed exploded. "Why, my dear boy, thet crazy mare has been sold at least twenty different times by Dunk Funk, and every time he gets her back."

Barbara began to giggle. "I just knew something was funny about the way that man sold that horse to Jim."

"Why shore, there's so much wrong with thet horse thet everyone's glad ta sell it back ta Dunk Funk in a couple days — at a big loss, of course."

Jim squelched his rising temper and even prayed he wouldn't get angry. "Look here, my Dad looked at that horse and he said she's as sound as a dollar!"

"Yup, she is," Jed admitted.

"And Mom said that horse is pretty as a picture," Jim went on.

"Yup, she be," Jed admitted.

"And she's as friendly and gentle as a kitten."

"Yup, she be," Jed admitted.

"And even Barbara here said she'd look nice pulling a buggy."

"Yup, she would."

"Well, then," said Jim triumphantly, "why did I get stuck on a horse like that fer just thirteen prime beaver skins?"

" 'Cause she ain't no good," Jed snapped. "Have ya tried ta ride her, er hitch her ta a buggy and take a trip?"

"No, Mr. Funk said to wait until nine tomorrow," Jim replied.

"And do ya know what's goin' ta happen when ya do?" Jed questioned as he shoved his hat back on top of his bald head in a comical sort of way.

"Sure, she'll race like the wind and look pretty as a picture!" Jim countered.

"Yup, yer right, but she'll race right straight back ta Dunk Funk's barn over in Puddle Creek Hollow."

"Wrong, I'll turn her around and we'll head home, that's too far for the first trip," Jim laughed.

"Wrong you are, my boy. There's not a man in the country could turn thet horse once she got a start. Unless ya get offa her back, er out of the buggy, and lead her where ya want ta go. Ya see, Dunk Funk trained her thet way fer a joke, and then he sells her ta somebody who doesn't know about her. She races home and the poor feller thet bought her is so disgusted thet he sells her back to Dunk Funk fer half price. That Dunk Funk's quite a practical joker."

"That's hard to believe," Jim said doubtfully. "Jed, I know how you like to kid folks; I think I got a real good trade."

"Jest wait till you start ta use her tomorrow. Yer'll see, and jest wait till ya hear Dunk Funk

roarin' with laughter when ya land in his barn."

Jim smiled in spite of the little chill of worry that raced up his spine, "I'll have the last laugh."

"Jim, I'm not a-kiddin'. I oughta' know, fer thet crooked horse trader hooked me on thet same mare jest last spring," and with those words he slapped the oxen and the creaky wagon rumbled down the road.

Barbara squealed and she almost fell off the pile of posts, for she laughed so hard. "Oh, I can hardly wait to see you taking off for Dunkin Funk's house tomorrow at nine."

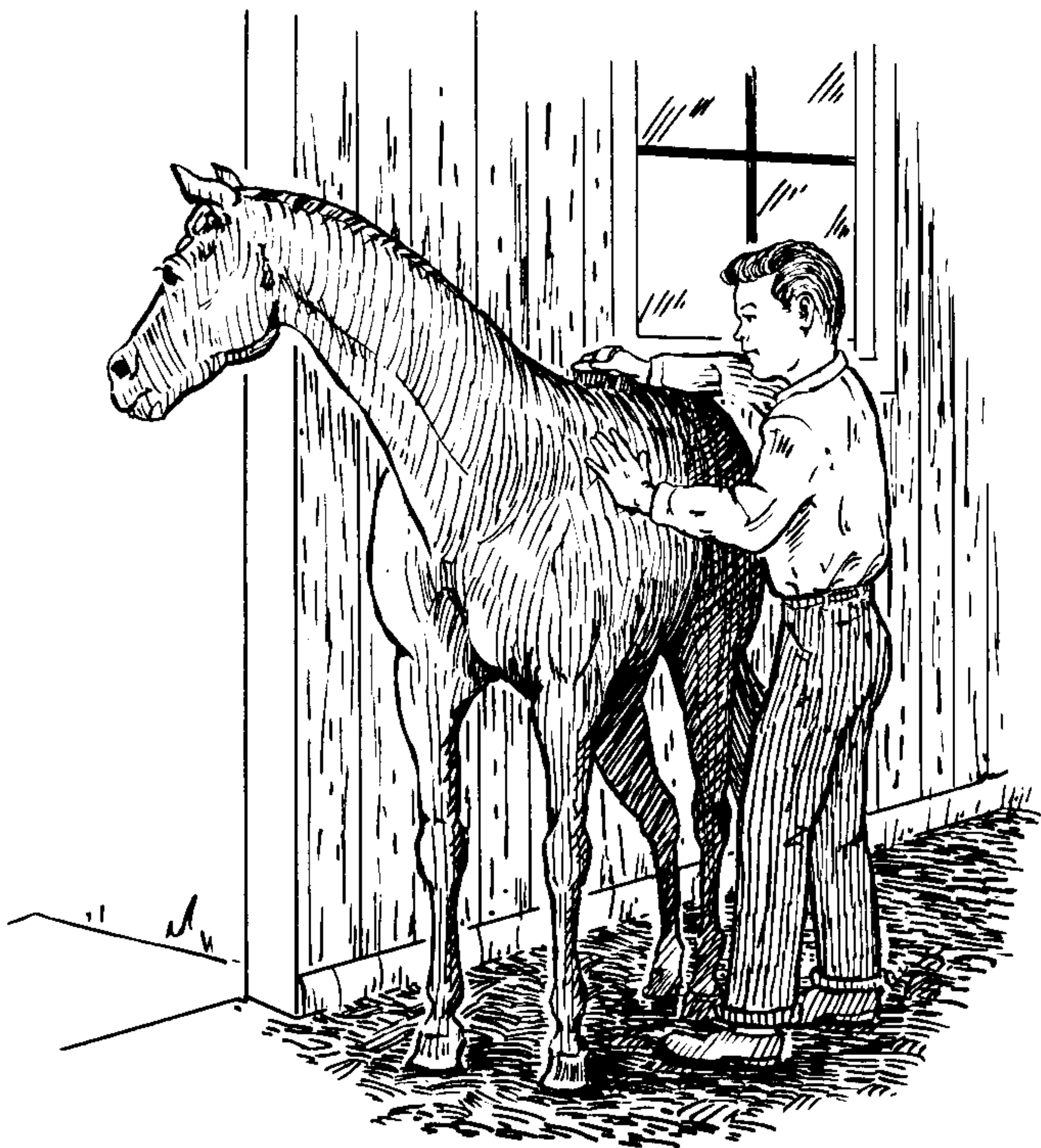
"The Lord gave me this horse in answer to my prayer. I know that."

Barbara just laughed a little more and then went home to tell her folks.

Jim finished the pile of logs and then spent two hours brushing the horse. She was about the gentlest animal he had ever seen, and while he had a deep troubled feeling he still figured that Jed was just kidding him.

Later he told his mother and father about Jed's visit. "Well," Mr. Spangler said after Jim finished, "I don't know about it. It does seem strange that Dunkin Funk let the horse go for thirteen beaver pelts, even though they were prime."

"But Dad, you know I asked the Lord to lead me," Jim protested, "and ever since I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour my prayers have always been answered. Sure, sometimes the



Lord answers my prayers by saying, 'No,' or 'Wait,' but He never lets me get stuck!"

"Oh, I'm sure the horse is all right," Mrs. Spangler said reassuringly.

Later, when he was alone in his bedroom, the first real doubts grew in Jim's mind. "How will I ever get Barbara to accept Christ as her Saviour if it turns out that this isn't an answer to prayer," he thought, just before he knelt by his bed to pray.

The following morning was another delightful spring day. How the birds were singing as Jim pulled on his pants, and how his mouth watered as he ate thirteen pancakes for breakfast, and how his heart tingled as he headed out to hitch the sorrel mare to the buggy!

"I think I'll call you Fleetfoot," he said as he worked.

Then Barbara and her Mother and Dad appeared, "Hi," Barbara greeted, "we came over to see the great horse perform."

Mr. and Mrs. Spangler came out and for five minutes they all laughed together, but when Jim laughed it was not from his heart. He kept silently praying that the horse would prove her worth.

"Well, I'm ready and it's about nine," Jim said, as he got up in the buggy.

"It's going to be a three-mile walk home," Mr. Hollis laughed.

Barbara giggled.

Jim didn't reply to them, but spoke to the horse, "All right, Fleetfoot, let's show them how good you are."

Fleetfoot started down the road and after two hundred feet broke into a brisk trot. He heard Mr. Hollis call, "Jim, turn her around at the apple tree."

The apple tree was only another hundred feet away and there was plenty of room to turn, so Jim drew up on the reins. Fleetfoot shook her

head and slowed down; then as quick as a flash she was into a full canter. Down the road she raced, right past the apple tree and out of sight of the folks standing near the post pile.

Clippity-clop, clippity-clop went her hoofs on the dirt road. Faster and faster she went until she was going like the wind when she went through the village of Cherry Corners.

Several men were on the porch of the general store and Jim could hear their laughter. "Why," he thought, "everybody knew about this horse but me. She isn't any good!"

On and on Fleetfoot went. Suddenly she turned a sharp corner that almost sent the buggy into a stream. Up a narrow lane, over a wooden bridge, around an apple orchard and then she headed for a big red barn. At least seven men were standing there and Dunkin Funk was there, too, laughing and laughing until his huge tummy just shook.

Fleetfoot slowed to a trot and then stopped at the barn. "Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" laughed Dunkin Funk, "I guess ya came back to sell thet horse for let's say — three beaver skins?"

Jim's shame was so deep he almost said, "Sure," but something inside stopped the words from coming. Instead he said softly, "No, I'll keep her."

"What!" Dunkin Funk snorted. "She's no good ta you! I'll give ya three beaver pelts ta take her off yer hands."

"No!" Jim said desperately. "I asked the Lord to let me have a horse. This is the one He gave me. She's mine. I'll keep her."

"Why, lad, I've sold thet horse twenty-seven times and every man sold her back ta me. It's all a joke. She's worthless. In fact, thet's her name. Every time ya hitch her up er ride her she'll race home."

"I'll keep her," Jim said, among jeers and laughter of the other men.

"Look, a joke's a joke. I'll give ya four beaver pelts fer her. I want her back. I play thet joke on everyone I can."

"I heard about your joke, Mr. Funk, but I'll keep her," Jim said as he got out of the buggy and took ahold of the bridle. "Come on, Fleetfoot, we're going home."

"No, wait, ya young whipper-snapper, I'll give ya six beaver pelts."

"No."

"Seven?"

"No."

"Eight?"

"No."

"Nine?"

"No."

"Thirteen?"

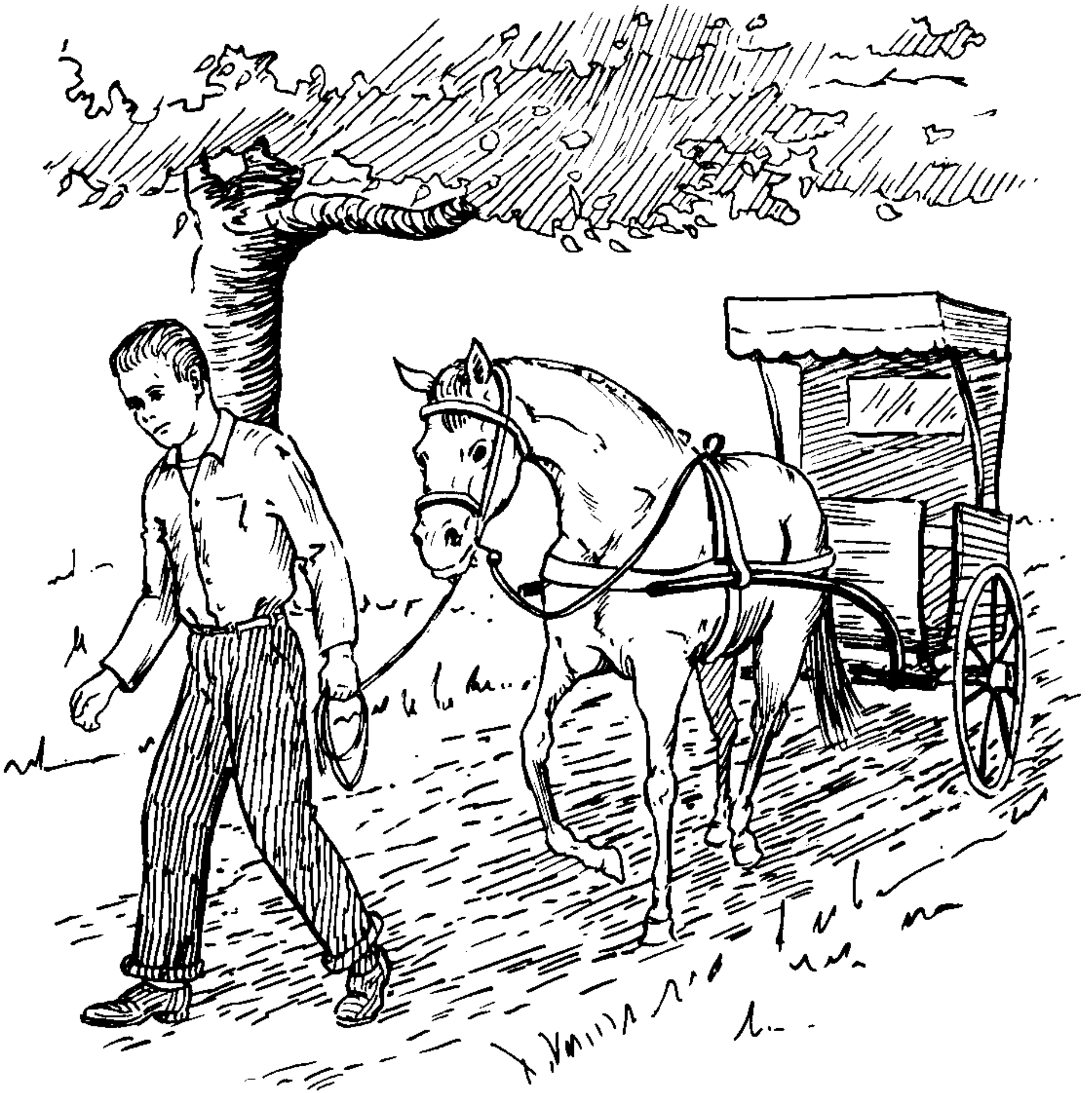
"No."

"Plus a dollar?"

"No."

Jim led the horse away. It was a hot and

humiliating three-mile walk, for everyone laughed as he went by.



When he reached home Barbara laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed, "Oh my, you did look silly trying to turn the horse."

"I guess I did," Jim admitted dolefully, "I guess you were right about it being a poor trade."

Just then Dunkin Funk rode up: "Young feller, I guess yer about ready to give me the horse by

now. I'll stick ta my word and give ya these thirteen beaver pelts and a dollar."

"She's mine," Jim said as he turned her loose in the pasture.

Dunkin Funk left after saying, "Well, when yer ready I'll take her back, but my offer from now on is two beaver pelts."

The days that followed weren't pleasant ones, for everyone kidded Jim about the horse. Twice he saddled her up, and twice he ended up at Dunkin Funk's barn. Each time the man offered two beaver pelts, and each time Jim refused.

"Dad," he said thoughtfully at the supper table one evening, "Fleetfoot is smart, and I was thinking, if Dunk Funk trained her to run home everytime she got a chance, couldn't we train her not to run home?"

"Sounds like it's worth a try. She's a beautiful animal and if she could be broken to obey she'd be worth fifty beaver pelts."

"But how to do it is the problem."

"Yes, Jim, now let's do some thinking. She usually walks about the first hundred feet or so and then breaks into a trot. Now, suppose you slip off her just before she begins to trot and lead her back. Try it, and if it works keep on doing it."

"Tomorrow I'll do it," Jim said with determination. "You know, I still feel sure the Lord let me get her. I love her with all my heart, but Barbara laughs every time she sees Fleetfoot. She tries to make me believe the Lord just doesn't

hear my prayers. At the rate she's going she'll never take Christ as her Saviour."

The talk drifted on to other things until it was again bedtime. As Jim always did each night, he prayed before going to bed, but his prayer had a new request, "Lord, help me train Fleetfoot."

The next day Jim made sure Barbara wasn't around when he saddled the horse. Sure enough, she started at a walk and then her legs broke into a trot. In a flash Jim was on the ground and Fleetfoot stopped and obediently followed him back home. Time after time, Jim mounted her and time after time he had to slide off and lead her back.

From then on Jim worked with the mare every chance he got, always being careful that Barbara or anyone else wouldn't see him. At first there was no sign of improvement, but within three weeks Fleetfoot was allowing herself to be ridden without bolting for a mile or better.

Then one night Jim said with excitement, "Dad, I believe I could take Fleetfoot anyplace now. Could I go out tonight when everybody is in bed in the village and ride over to Dunk Funk's place and see if she'll come back with me?"

"All right, I'll go with you on the other horse, just in case something goes wrong."

"Dad," Jim said soberly as they saddled the horse at ten-thirty that night, "I'm more sure than ever that the Lord gave me Fleetfoot. I'm positive

of it. And now that she's trained, she's the keenest horse in the state."

"I believe it," Mr. Spangler said as he mounted his horse. "And now let's ask God to undertake for us on this trip."

After earnest prayer they started out. No one saw them. The journey to Dunk Funk's barn didn't seem to take much time, for the moon was out and the fields and woods were brilliant under its glow.

At the barn Jim said, "Dad, it's got to work! Come on, Fleetfoot! Let's go home."

He lifted the reins and tried to turn her. For a moment the beautiful horse hesitated and then with a quiet whinny she turned and trotted obediently toward home.

"Oh, Dad, I'm so happy I could cry, and I wouldn't care who saw me. Even Barbara!"

"We can praise the Lord," Mr. Spangler said gently.

The next day Jim rode over to Dunk Funk's house and the fat man saw him coming, "So, Worthless brought you here again? I have the two beaver pelts ready."

"Never mind," Jim said, "I'm going to ride her home now."

"Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho!" the man roared, but his roar died out when Fleetfoot turned and trotted away.

Jim felt proud for a moment, but then he was sorry for his pride and turned Fleetfoot back.

"Mr. Funk, you see how the Lord answers prayer?"

Mr. Funk stared for a moment and then shook his head. "Ya must know the Lord pretty well ta have him change that horse fer ya."

"I do," Jim said softly, "and someday I'll tell you more about Him."

"Ya do thet, young feller," the fat man said soberly. "I'll give ya \$150.00 fer her right now."

"No thanks," came the reply.

Jim let Fleetfoot canter home; she was almost as swift as the breeze that scampered through the trees along the road.

The next morning Barbara came over, and as usual began to tease. "It's such a blue sky, golden-feeling day, I'd love to take a ride to Dunk Funk's."

Jim walked toward the pasture. "Fine, I was thinking of asking you to go for a ride. I'll hitch Fleetfoot up."

"Silly boy," Barbara laughed, "I guess I don't want to go. The walk home would take too long."

"If I could get you a ride home would you go, Barbara?"

"Well — all right, if you'll get me a ride home."

"Hop in."

And off they went, with Fleetfoot clippety-clopping along the road. At the gate to the Funk farm Jim pulled up, "I guess this is far enough," he said.

Barbara spoke, "Now don't forget you promised me a ride home."

"Right, and here we go!"

Fleetfoot turned and at a merry trot headed home. Barbara sputtered, "But — how —"

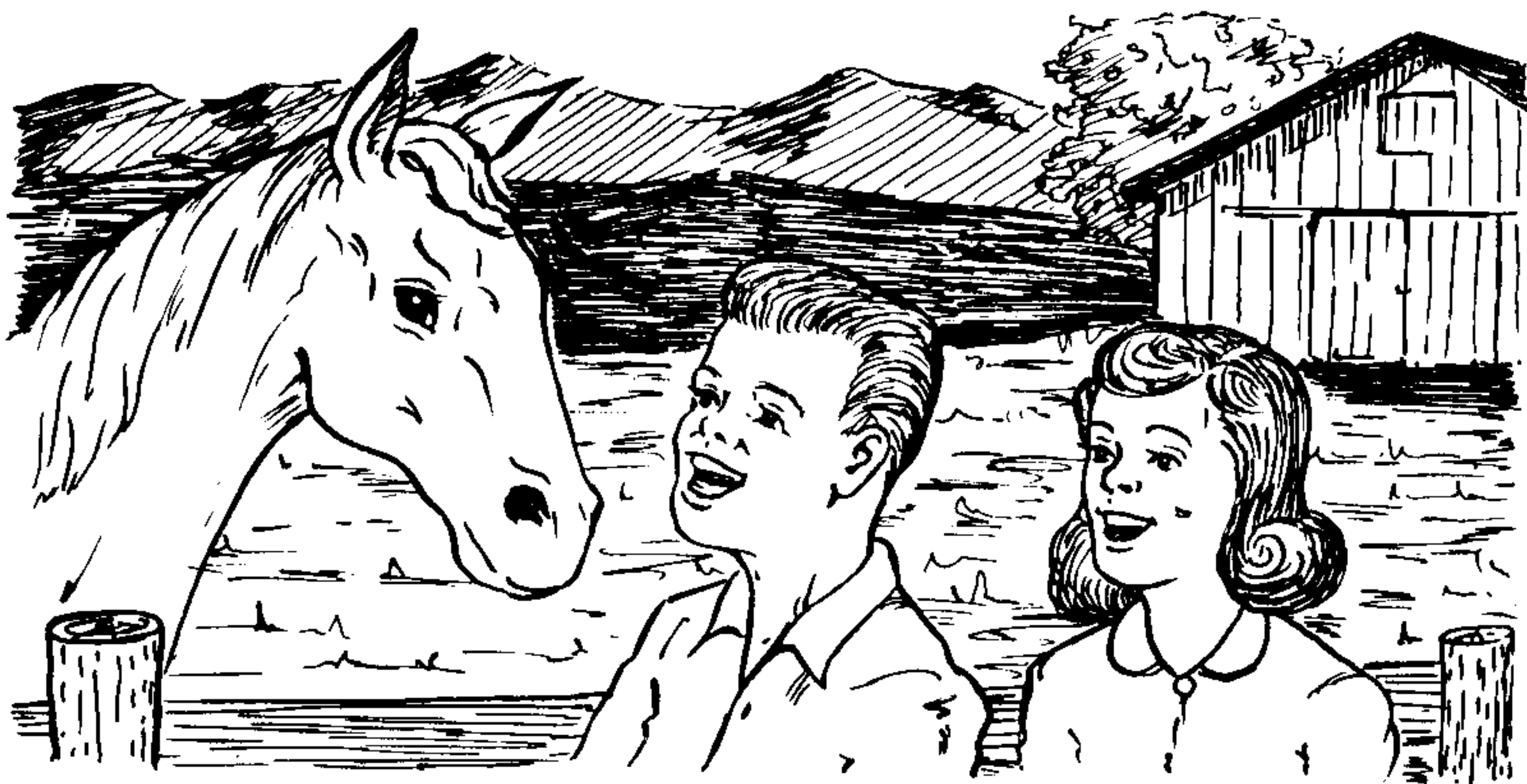
"Please stop complaining. You have your ride home."

"Yes, but I —"

"I figure this horse is worth about fifty beaver skins now. The Lord heard my prayer."

Jim watched the expression on Barbara's face change. "You see, Barbara, sometimes the Lord makes a fellow wait before the prayer gets a reply. But this is it."

For a few minutes there was silence, and then Barbara said softly, "I'm glad the Lord answered your prayer."



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